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10/777,902

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EXAMINER

ENGLUND, TERRY LEE

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2816

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PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/777,902

Applicant(s)

KOCH ET AL.

Examiner

Terry L. Englund

Art Unit

2816

Period for Reply -- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 04 February 2008.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3,4,6,8,9 and 11-31 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3,4,6,8,9 and 11-31 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 13 February 2004 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Response to RCE/Amendment

The RCE and amendment submitted on Feb 4, 2008 have been reviewed and considered with the following results:

Both were approved and entered.

Amended claims 19 and 29 overcame the objections to claims 19-21 and 29-30 described on page 3 of the previous Office Action. Although those objections have been withdrawn, several others were noted when the claims were again reviewed. These objections, either related to amended changes or inadvertently overlooked before, are described later under the appropriate section.

The dependency change within claims 28 and 29 overcame their respective rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112 described on page 3 of the previous Office Action. Although those rejections have now been withdrawn, the amended changes created new objections, which are described later under the appropriate section.

Amended independent claims 1, 22, and 26, and amended dependent claims 9, 12, 20, 25, and 28-30, overcame all of the prior art rejections described on pages 4-16 of the previous Office Action. Therefore, the following rejections have been withdrawn: 1) claims 1, 3-4, 6, 8-9, 11-18, and 22-30 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), with respect to Naganuma/Bui et al.; and 2) claims 19-21 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), with respect to Naganuma/Bui et al./Yoshizawa et al./Takenaka. However, those rejections have now been modified to take into account the amended changes, and some new claim rejections are cited to also account for "the only voltage responsive

switchable capacitor” cited in newly added claim 31. All of these prior art rejections are described later under the appropriate section.

Comments related to the claimed limitations, and the applicant’s arguments, are described later under the Response to Arguments section.

Claim Objections

Claims 3-4, 6, 21, and 28-30 are now objected to because of the following informalities: It is suggested “between one” on line 2 of claim 3 be changed to --between the one-- to more clearly refer back to “the control electrode of one” now cited on line 23 of claim 1. Since the dependency of claim 28 was changed to claim 26, which does not cite “at least one switchable capacitor”, it is suggested “the at least one switchable capacitor” on line 2 of claim 6 be changed to --one of the first and second capacitors--, and “said at least one switchable capacitor” on line 4 of the same claim be changed to --said first and second capacitors-- to minimize possible confusion. After reconsidering the finite capacitance and open circuit limitations cited within claim 21, it is now believed they are reversed. For example, wouldn’t an NFET have finite capacitance when the voltage is greater than the first threshold (e.g. 0.33 V_{dd} shown in Fig. 2), and be an open circuit when the voltage is below the first threshold? Also, wouldn’t a PFET have finite capacitance when the voltage is less than the second threshold (e.g. 0.67 V_{dd} shown in Fig. 2), and be an open circuit when the voltage is greater than the second threshold? Similar to claim 6 above, it is suggested the “said at least one switchable capacitor” cited in claims 28 (e.g. line 5), and 29 (e.g. line 5) be modified to clearly relate back to the first and second switchable capacitors cited within claim 26. Related to this, “another switchable capacitor” in claim 30, line 2 needs to refer back to the first and second switchable capacitors cited within

claim 26. Dependent claims carry over any objection(s) from any claim(s) upon which they depend. Appropriate corrections, and/or clarifications, are required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. The applicants are advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1, 3-4, 6, 8-9, 11-18, and 22-30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Naganuma, in view of Bui et al. (Bui), both references cited in the previous Office Action. Fig. 1 of Naganuma shows a circuit comprising first terminal 1 understood to be connected to a voltage source (not shown) that provides input signal a transitioning between first/second levels (e.g. 5V and 0V as shown in Figs. 2(A) and 2(B)); driver 7 including first/second opposite conductivity type transistors $7_1/7_2$ (i.e. PFET 7_1 and NFET 7_2) with their respective control electrode b/c, and a (source/drain) path arranged to be switched on and off in response to a voltage applied to the control electrode being on opposite sides of a threshold level

(of each transistor); first/second transistor paths of $7_1/7_2$ are connected in series across opposite power supply terminals 5V and 0V; output terminal 10 is between the paths; circuitry $6_1/6_2$ is connected between first terminal 1 and control electrodes b/c for causing the first/second transistor paths to be in on and off states (e.g. when the voltage source provides input signal a at a first level (i.e. high), first transistor 7_1 is on and second transistor 7_2 is off; and when input signal a is at a second level (i.e. low), first transistor 7_1 is off and second transistor 7_2 is on). However, Naganuma does not show or disclose circuitry $6_1/6_2$ with at least one voltage responsive switchable capacitor. Bui shows circuitry 802-808 in Fig. 8A receiving a single input signal IN, and providing a control signal to driver 809. Bui's circuitry provides a delay period determined by resistive elements 803,805 and capacitive elements 807,808. One of ordinary skill in the art knows this is one type of a time constant circuit. Each of Naganuma's inverter blocks 6_1 and 6_2 is also one known type of a time constant circuit (e.g. see column 4, lines 24-27), and Naganuma discloses these time constant circuits suppress output noise and excess current in the driver (e.g. see column 7, lines 62-65), which occurs when both transistors within the driver are conducting at the same time (e.g. see column 2, lines 31-37). Naganuma also discloses that although the simple time constant circuits can be inserted into the circuit, "embodiments are possible to modify in various ways without departing from the spirit of the invention" (e.g. see column 7, lines 62-68). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify each of Naganuma's inverter blocks 6_1 and 6_2 by adding Bui's capacitors 807,808 to each inverter block's output b/c. With Bui's capacitors 807,808 coupled to output terminals b and c of Naganuma's inverters 6_1 and 6_2 , respectively, the modified circuit will have the same type of structure as the applicants' own Fig. 1 with two minor exceptions (i.e.

related to the series connection of a transistor and resistor within each inverter). For example, Naganuma's input terminal 1, first inverter 6₁ (with PFET 5₁₁, NFET 5₁₂, resistor R1, and output b), driver 7 (with first (PFET) transistor 7₁, second (NFET) transistor 7₂, and output 10), and second inverter 6₂ (with PFET 5₂₁, NFET 5₂₂, resistor R2, and output c); and first/second power supply terminals 5V/0V correspond to input terminal 39, first inverter 20 (with PFET 36, NFET 38, resistor 40, and output 28), driver 24 (with first (PFET) transistor 48, second (NFET) transistor 50, and output 26), and second inverter 22 (with PFET 42, NFET 44, resistor 46, and output 30); and first/second power supply terminals 16/18 shown in the applicants' own Fig. 1. With the addition of Bui's capacitors 807,808 to Naganuma's circuit, Bui's NFET 808 (connected to output b) and PFET 807 (connected to output c) correspond to the applicants' NFET 32 and PFET 34, respectively. Voltage responsive switchable capacitor NFET 808 will have its control electrode (i.e. gate) connected to the control electrode of first transistor 7₁ to receive the voltage (on b) applied to the gate of first transistor 7₁, and voltage responsive switchable capacitor PFET 807 will have its control electrode (i.e. gate) connected to the control electrode of second transistor 7₂ to receive the voltage (on c) applied to the gate of second transistor 7₂. Therefore, with this circuit configuration, the Naganuma/Bui circuit will be functionally equivalent to the applicants' own Fig. 1, and claims 1, 3-4, 6, 8-9, 11-18, and 22-30 are rendered obvious. The following descriptions address the claimed limitations in more detail. Bui's NFET 808 configured capacitor will be open when the voltage at its gate (e.g. corresponding to output b or c of its respective inverter block) is below the capacitor configured transistor's threshold voltage (i.e. the voltage difference between the gate and drain/source connections is less than the NFET's threshold voltage), and have a finite capacitance when the

voltage at its gate is above the capacitor configured transistor's threshold voltage (i.e. the voltage difference between the gate and drain/source connections is greater than the NFET's threshold voltage). Similarly, Bui's PFET 807 configured capacitor will be open when the voltage at its gate (e.g. corresponding to output b or c of its respective inverter block) is above the capacitor configured transistor's threshold voltage (i.e. the voltage difference between the gate and drain/source connections is less than the PFET's threshold voltage), and have a finite capacitance when the voltage at its gate is below the capacitor configured transistor's threshold voltage (i.e. the voltage difference between the gate and drain/source connections is greater than the PFET's threshold voltage). Viewed in another manner, first (PFET) transistor 7_1 will be off when the voltage on b is higher than a threshold voltage equal to $5V - V_{tp}$ (with V_{tp} representing a threshold of a PFET), and first (PFET) transistor 7_1 will be on when the voltage on b is lower than that threshold voltage. Similarly, a PFET configured as a capacitor (e.g. Bui's 807) will be a substantially open circuit when the voltage across it (with respect to its gate and its source/drain) is less than a threshold voltage equal to $5V - V_{tp}$ (with V_{tp} representing a threshold of a PFET), and it will be at a finite capacitance when the voltage across it is greater than that threshold voltage. Second (NFET) transistor 7_2 will be off when the voltage on c is less than a threshold voltage equal to $0V + V_{tn}$ (with V_{tn} representing a threshold of an NFET), and second (NFET) transistor 7_2 will be on when the voltage on c is higher than that threshold voltage. Similarly, an NFET configured as a capacitor (e.g. Bui's 808) will be a substantially open circuit when the voltage across it (with respect to its gate and its source/drain) is less than a threshold voltage equal to $0V + V_{tn}$, and it will be at a finite capacitance when the voltage across it is greater than that threshold voltage. Therefore, it would be understood by one of ordinary skill in

the art that the threshold voltages are between the levels of the opposite power supply terminals, and these capacitor configured transistors (i.e. Bui's 807 and 808) function as one type of a switchable capacitor. This renders claim 1 obvious. The modified Naganuma/Bui circuitry provides a slightly more complex time constant circuit, which can be used to more accurately set the delay time via the RC components within the circuitry. The time constant of each block can be more accurately controlled with this more complex circuitry, thus ensuring that both transistors within driver 7 will not be conducting at the same time (i.e. simultaneously on), and the dead time (i.e. when both switching transistors within the driver circuit are off) will be kept to a minimum. For example, one of ordinary skill in the art knows that excess current caused by both transistors within the driver circuit conducting at the same time is undesirable. Therefore, it is preferable to ensure the conducting transistor of the driver will be turned off before the other transistor within the driver will be turned on. However, too much dead (or blanking) time caused by both transistors being off at the same time is also undesirable for fast switching operations. Therefore, the on/off operations of the driver transistors must be carefully, and accurately, controlled to ensure both transistors are temporarily off before the next transistor begins to conduct, and to also minimize that dead time. This control can be accomplished by utilizing Naganuma's inverter blocks 6₁ and 6₂, along with corresponding capacitor configured transistors from Bui. Since each of power supply terminals 5V and 0V are a known type of a DC power supply terminal of the circuit, claim 3 is rendered obvious. Resistors R1 and R2, and each transistor within inverters 6₁ and 6₂, are resistive type elements, and at least one of them is connected to supply current to their corresponding switchable capacitor in response to the voltage at first terminal 1, rendering claim 4 obvious. With a corresponding pair of Bui's

switchable capacitors 807,808 coupled to each output of Naganuma's inverter blocks 6₁ and 6₂, the at least one switchable capacitor includes first/second voltage controlled switchable capacitors connected to delay coupling of the transitions to the control electrodes of the first/second transistors 7₁/7₂, and claim 8 is rendered obvious. For example, the first and second capacitors can correspond to Bui's NFET 808 and PFET 807, respectively. Using NFET 808 connected to control electrode b of first transistor 7₁, and PFET 807 connected to control electrode c of second transistor 7₂, as examples, first capacitor 808 will have a finite capacitance on a first side of a first voltage threshold (i.e. a voltage greater than a threshold voltage of $0V+V_{tn}$ as previously described), and have a substantially open circuit on a second side of the first voltage threshold (i.e. a voltage less than a threshold voltage of $0V+V_{tn}$ as previously described); and second capacitor 807 will have a finite capacitance on a second side of a second voltage threshold (i.e. a voltage greater than a threshold voltage of $5V-V_{tp}$ as previously described), and have a substantially open circuit on a first side of the second voltage threshold (i.e. a voltage less than threshold voltage $5V-V_{tp}$ as previously described). Since a threshold voltage (e.g. $5V-V_{tp}$) of a PFET is greater than the threshold voltage (e.g. $0V+V_{tn}$) of an NFET, and with first capacitor 808 coupled between control electrode b and power supply terminal 0V, and second capacitor 807 coupled between control electrode c and power supply terminal 5V, claim 9 is rendered obvious. Claim 11 is rendered obvious for the same type of reasoning as previously described above with respect to claim 4, and Naganuma's first/second resistive elements R1/R2. First/second transistors 7₁/7₂ are PFET/NFET, respectively, and first/second capacitors 808/807 are NFET/PFET, respectively. The threshold voltage (e.g. $0V+V_{tn}$) of first capacitor 808 is lower than threshold level (e.g. $5V-V_{tp}$) of first transistor 7₁, and threshold

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voltage (e.g. $5V - V_{tp}$) of second capacitor 807 is higher than threshold level (e.g. $0V + V_{tn}$) of second transistor 7₁₂. This renders claim 12 obvious. Since Naganuma and Bui disclose the relationships between their inventions and integrated circuits (e.g. see column 1, lines 13-15 and column 1, lines 9-11, respectively), it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art that the at least one switchable capacitor and the PFET/NFET transistors of the driver are included on an integrated circuit chip, and the resistive element (i.e. R₁, and/or R₂) is a resistor, rendering claim 13 obvious. Circuitry 6₁, 6₂, 807, 808 further includes first/second inverters 6₁/6₂ each having input terminal 1 for simultaneously enabling the first/second inverters in response to voltage at first terminal 1, and an output terminal (b for inverter 6₁, and c for inverter 6₂). Output terminal b of first inverter 6₁ is connected to supply current via a first DC path (through 5₁₁) to first capacitor 808 and control electrode b of first transistor 7₁ to the exclusion of second capacitor 807 connected to control electrode c of second transistor 7₂; and output terminal c of second inverter 6₂ is connected to supply current via a second DC path (through 5₂₂) to second capacitor 807 and control electrode c of second transistor 7₂ to the exclusion of first capacitor 808 connected to control electrode b of second transistor 7₁, rendering claim 14 obvious. Since first/second transistors 7₁/7₂, first/ second inverters 6₁/6₂, and first/second capacitors 808/807 all comprise field effect transistors, claim 15 is rendered obvious. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, as previously described, to include all of the field effect transistors on an integrated circuit chip that includes first/second resistors R₁/R₂ respectively connected effectively with first/second transistors 7₁/7₂ and first/second inverters 6₁/6₂, rendering claim 16 obvious. Since first/second resistors R₁/R₂ are respectively included in first/second inverters 6₁/6₂, claim 17 is also rendered obvious. For the same type of reasoning as previously

described above, and without repeating all of those various details, first/second inverters $6_1/6_2$ each comprise a PFET and an NFET (i.e. inverter 6_1 comprises PFET 5_{11} and NFET 5_{12} , and inverter 6_2 comprises PFET 5_{21} and NFET 5_{22}), and the inverters are driven in parallel by voltage on input terminal 1, rendering claim 18 obvious. First/second transistors $7_1/7_2$ are PFET/NFET transistors, respectively, and first/second capacitors 808/807 are NFET/PFET, respectively. First transistor 7_1 has a source drain path connection to positive power supply terminal 5V, and second transistor 7_2 has a source drain path connection to negative power supply terminal 0V, wherein these positive/negative power supply terminals are the first/second power supply terminals, respectively. First capacitor 808 has a first electrode connected to gate electrode b of first transistor 7_1 and a second electrode connected to negative power supply terminal 0V; and second capacitor 807 has a first electrode connected to gate electrode c of second transistor 7_2 and a second electrode connected to positive power supply terminal 5V. Therefore, claim 25 is rendered obvious for the same reasoning as applied to claim 12. Also by applying similar reasoning as previously described above, but interpreting the modified configuration described above (i.e. adding Bui's switchable capacitors 807,808 to output terminals b/c of Naganuma's inverters $6_1/6_2$) in a different manner, during a first interval (e.g. input signal a is high) first transistor 7_1 will be on and second transistor 7_2 will be off; and second capacitor 807, connected between 5V and output terminal b, will charge by current flowing from 5V to 0V through 807, 5_{12} , and R1, wherein first capacitor 808 (connected to output terminal c) will be off. This will occur because control electrode b (e.g. corresponding to first voltage b) will have a first value (e.g. low), and the 5V coupled to the other side of second capacitor 807 will allow capacitor 807 to have a finite capacitance and charge, wherein control electrode c (e.g. corresponding to second

voltage c) will also have the first value, but since the other side of first capacitor 808 is connected to a low (e.g. 0V), first capacitor 808 will be off. During a second interval (input signal a is low) first transistor 7_1 will be off and second transistor 7_2 will be on; and first capacitor 808, connected between 0V and output terminal c, will charge by current flowing from 5V to 0V through R2, S_{21} , and 808, wherein second capacitor 807 (connected to output terminal b) will be off. This will occur because first voltage b will have a second value (e.g. high), and the 5V coupled to the other side of second capacitor 807 will prevent capacitor 807 from charging by switching it off, wherein second voltage c will have the second value, and since the other side of first capacitor 808 is connected to a low (e.g. 0V), second capacitor 808 will have a finite capacitance and be charged. One of ordinary skill in the art would understand that the timing (delay) related to the turning on and off of the first/second transistors will ensure both transistors are never conducting at the same time. However, during the transitioning periods between the first and second intervals, the driver transistor that is initially conducting will be turned off before the other driver transistor will be turned on to minimize excess current (e.g. crowbar or shoot through). As an example, prior to the transition from the first to second interval, the following conditions are present: input signal a is high, first transistor 7_1 conducts, second transistor 7_2 is off, first capacitor 808 is off, and second capacitor 807 charges as described above. When input signal a transitions from a high to low level, gate electrode b of first transistor 7_1 will have an initial portion of the transitional period when its voltage will be low enough (i.e. less than $0V + V_{tn}$) to keep capacitor 808 off (i.e. open) and first transistor 7_1 on; during a second portion (when the voltage on b is above $0V + V_{tn}$, but below $5V - V_{tp}$), capacitor 808 will be on providing a finite capacitance, and first transistor 7_1 will still be on; and once the

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voltage on b is above $5V - V_{tp}$ (i.e. a third portion of the transitional period), capacitor 808 will still be on, but first transistor 7_1 will be off. The RC time delay related to inverters $6_1/6_2$, and their corresponding capacitors 807,808, will ensure both transistors are temporarily off before second transistor 7_2 begins to conduct, but with minimal dead time (i.e. when both transistors are off). Similar type operational periods will occur with respect to gate electrode c; and also when input signal a transitions from a low to high level. For example, as input signal a begins to decrease, the current path through 5_{12} and R_1 of first inverter 6_1 turns off and transistor 5_{11} turns on, output terminal b of first inverter 6_1 becomes high, first capacitor 808 charges, and first transistor 7_1 turns off. Associated with the high to low transition of input signal a, transistor 5_{22} eventually turns off and the current path through R_2 and 5_{21} of second inverter 6_2 turns on, output terminal c of second inverter 6_2 becomes high, second capacitor 807 quits charging, and second transistor 7_2 turns on. Once these conditions are reached, the circuit will be in the second interval. The transition from the second interval to the first interval will be the opposite of those described above. Since one of ordinary skill in the art would understand that these conditions include the charging, discharging, and turning off of the switchable capacitors, as well as the on/off operations of the driver's transistors, claim 22 is rendered obvious. First capacitor 808 will switch off (i.e. become open) prior to first voltage b reaching the first value (i.e. low), and second capacitor 807 will switch off (i.e. become open) prior to second voltage c reaching the second value (i.e. high). For example, with first (NFET) capacitor 808 having one electrode coupled to 0V, once the other electrode coupled to first voltage b receives a voltage level less than the threshold of NFET capacitor 808, the capacitor will switch off. This will occur prior to first voltage b eventually decreasing to the first value (i.e. 0V). Similarly, with second (PFET)

capacitor 807 having one electrode coupled to 5V, once the other electrode coupled to second voltage c receives a voltage level greater than the threshold of PFET capacitor 807, the capacitor will switch off. This will occur prior to the second voltage c eventually increasing to the second value (i.e. 5V), rendering claim 23 obvious. Since first/second capacitors 808/807 are formed from opposite conductivity transistors, and first capacitor 808 is connected between first voltage b and 0V, and second capacitor 807 is connected between second voltage c and 5V, the capacitors will be charged and switched off in response to the first/second voltages having values on opposite sides of first/second thresholds respectively associated with the first/second capacitors, thus rendering claim 24 obvious. For example, NFET capacitor 808 has an NFET threshold, and will be off when the voltage at its gate is less than its threshold (i.e. the voltage difference between the gate and drain/source connections is less than the NFET's threshold voltage), wherein PFET capacitor 807 has a PFET threshold, and will be off when the voltage at its gate is greater than its threshold (i.e. the voltage difference between the gate and drain/source connections is less than the PFET's threshold voltage). Claims 26-30, and 6 are rendered obvious for the same type of reasoning as described above with respect to the other claims. For example, first/second transistors $7_1/7_2$ are PFET/ NFET transistors respectively; the opposite power supply terminals 5V/0V are first/second power supply terminals 5V/0V, respectively, wherein first power supply terminal 5V is connected to voltage 5V having a higher value than voltage 0V connected to second power supply terminal 0V; said at least one switchable capacitor 808,807 comprises PFET 807 having a gate electrode connected to gate electrode c of NFET second transistor 7_2 , and the source and drain electrodes of PFET capacitor 807 is connected to first power supply terminal 5V, wherein PFET capacitor 807 does not affect current flowing

between input terminal 1 and the gate of PFET first transistor 7₁, rendering claim 28 obvious. Similar to claim 28 described above, but having said at least one switchable capacitor 808,807 comprising NFET 808, it has a gate electrode connected to gate electrode b of PFET first transistor 7₁, and the source and drain electrodes of NFET switchable capacitor 808 are connected to second power supply terminal 0V, wherein NFET capacitor 808 does not affect current flowing between input terminal 1 and the gate of NFET second transistor 7₂, thus rendering claim 29 obvious. The circuit further comprises another switchable capacitor comprising PFET 807 having a gate electrode connected to gate electrode c of NFET second transistor 7₂, and the source and drain electrodes of PFET capacitor 807 being connected to first power supply terminal 5V, wherein PFET capacitor 807 does not affect current flowing between input terminal 1 and the gate of PFET first transistor 7₁. This renders claim 30 obvious.

Claims 19-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Naganuma/Bui as applied to claim 18 above, and in view of the references by Yoshizawa et al. (Yoshizawa) and Takenaka. As previously described, the obvious modification of Naganuma's circuit with respect to Bui's switchable capacitors, reads on the limitations recited within claim 18, and closely correspond to the applicants' own Fig. 1 circuit. However, the first/second resistors of inverters 6₁/6₂ are not connected in the same manner as recited within claim 19 (and shown in the applicants' Fig. 1). However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to reverse the series connection sequence of Naganuma's first resistor R1 and NFET 5₁₂ within inverter 6₁, and also to reverse the series connection sequence of second resistor R2 and PFET 5₂₁ in inverter 6₂. For example, Yoshizawa's Fig. 3 shows inverter 5 comprising PFET 35, NFET 28, and resistor 51 corresponding to Naganuma's inverter 6₁ with its PFET 5₁₁, NFET 5₁₂

and resistor R1, respectively. In Fig. 2, Yoshizawa shows inverter 5 comprising PFET 34, NFET 27, and resistor 50 corresponding to the applicants' own inverter 20 with its PFET 36, NFET 38, and resistor 40. Yoshizawa discloses the "same operation as that in the circuit of Fig. 2 is conducted" with respect to Fig. 3 (e.g. see column 4, lines 34-35). Therefore, this is one example of reversing the positions of a resistor and transistor coupled in series, wherein the circuitry will still provide the same function. Another similar example is shown in Figs. 4B and 4C of Takenaka. However, unlike the Yoshizawa reference which shows a resistor coupled between the NFET and either an unlabeled low voltage (see Fig. 3) or the output terminal (see Fig. 2), Takenaka's examples show an unlabeled resistor coupled between an unlabeled PFET and either voltage VCC (Fig. 4B) or the output terminal (Fig. 4C). It is noted that Takenaka's Fig. 4B corresponds to Naganuma's inverter 6₂, and Fig. 4C corresponds to the applicants' inverter 22. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to either replace the inverters of Naganuma with equivalent inverters (e.g. inverter 5 of Yoshizawa's Fig. 2 for Naganuma's inverter 6₁, and Takenaka's Fig. 4C inverter for Naganuma's inverter 6₂; or to reverse the series connections of the resistor with its corresponding transistor. With these modifications, first resistor R1 of Naganuma will be connected between the source drain path of NFET 5₁₂ of first inverter 6₁ and output terminal b of first inverter 6₁, and second resistor R2 will be connected between the source drain path of PFET 5₂₁ of second inverter 6₂ and output terminal c of second inverter 6₂; or first resistor 50 of Yoshizawa's Fig. 2 will be connected between the source drain path of NFET 27 of first inverter 5 and the unlabeled output terminal of first inverter 5, and second resistor R of Takenaka will be connected between the source drain path of the unlabeled PFET of the second unlabeled inverter shown in Fig. 4C and its unlabeled

output terminal, rendering claim 19 obvious. The positioning of the transistor and resistor within each inverter can obviously be reversed since they are connected in series between the corresponding inverter's output terminal and the inverter's power supply terminal. Therefore, this series connection forms a current path between those terminals, and since no output is taken from between those two elements (e.g. Naganuma's transistor S_{12} and first resistor R_1), their specific series arrangement is not critical. Bui's first/second capacitors 808/807 include NFET 808 and PFET 807, respectively. This, along with the same type of reasoning as applied to claim 12 above with respect to the threshold voltages and threshold levels, renders claim 20 obvious. NFET 808 will have a first (i.e. NFET) threshold (e.g. $0V + V_{tn}$ as previously described), and PFET 808 will have a second (i.e. PFET) threshold (e.g. $5V - V_{tp}$ as previously described). These thresholds are different, and one of ordinary skill in the art would understand they are also between the first/second levels. First NFET capacitor 808 will have a finite capacitance for a voltage above the second (i.e. NFET) threshold, and have a substantially open circuit for a voltage below the second threshold; and second PFET capacitor 807 will have a finite capacitance for a voltage below the first (i.e. PFET) threshold, and have a substantially open circuit for a voltage above the first threshold. One of ordinary skill in the art would understand the first threshold (e.g. corresponding to $5V - V_{tp}$) is greater than the second threshold (e.g. corresponding to $5V + V_{tn}$) to ensure the driver transistors will be turned on and off without having both on at any one time, thus rendering claim 21 obvious.

Claims 1, 3-4, 8, 14-18, and 31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Naganuma (cited in the previous Office Action) in view of Love, a reference cited on IDS forms the applicant had previously submitted on Feb 13, 2004 and Nov 14, 2005. Fig. 1 of

Naganuma shows a circuit comprising first terminal 1 understood to be connected to a voltage source (not shown) that provides input signal a transitioning between first/second levels (e.g. 5V and 0V as shown in Figs. 2(A) and 2(B)); driver 7 including first/second opposite conductivity type transistors $7_1/7_2$ (i.e. PFET 7_1 and NFET 7_2) with their respective control electrode b/c, and a (source/drain) path arranged to be switched on and off in response to a voltage applied to the control electrode being on opposite sides of a threshold level (of each transistor); first/second transistor paths of $7_1/7_2$ are connected in series across opposite power supply terminals 5V and 0V; output terminal 10 is between the paths; circuitry $6_1/6_2$ is connected between first terminal 1 and control electrodes b/c for causing the first/second transistor paths to be in on and off states (e.g. when the voltage source provides input signal a at a first level (i.e. high), first transistor 7_1 is on and second transistor 7_2 is off; and when input signal a is at a second level (i.e. low), first transistor 7_1 is off and second transistor 7_2 is on). However, Naganuma does not show or disclose circuitry $6_1/6_2$ with at least one voltage responsive switchable capacitor. Love shows circuitry 68-80 in Fig. 3 receiving a single input signal IN, and providing a control signal to driver 90. Love's circuitry provides a delay period (e.g. RC time constant) determined by resistive element 72 and capacitive element 80. One of ordinary skill in the art knows this is one type of a time constant circuit. Each of Naganuma's inverter blocks 6_1 and 6_2 is also one known type of a time constant circuit (e.g. see column 4, lines 24-27), and Naganuma discloses these time constant circuits suppress output noise and excess current in the driver (e.g. see column 7, lines 62-65), which occurs when both transistors within the driver are conducting at the same time (e.g. see column 2, lines 31-37). Naganuma also discloses that although the simple time constant circuits can be inserted into the circuit, "embodiments are possible to modify in various ways without

departing from the spirit of the invention” (e.g. see column 7, lines 62-68). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify each of Naganuma’s inverter blocks 6₁ and 6₂ by adding Love’s capacitor 80 to each inverter block’s output b/c. With Love’s capacitor 80 coupled to output terminals b and c of Naganuma’s inverters 6₁ and 6₂, respectively, the modified circuit will have the same basic type of structure as the applicants’ own Fig. 1 with three minor exceptions (i.e. related to the series connection of a transistor and resistor within each inverter; and the use of an NMOS transistor configured as a capacitor instead of a PMOS transistor). For example, Naganuma’s input terminal 1, first inverter 6₁ (with PFET 5₁₁, NFET 5₁₂, resistor R1, and output b), driver 7 (with first (PFET) transistor 7₁, second (NFET) transistor 7₂, and output 10), and second inverter 6₂ (with PFET 5₂₁, NFET 5₂₂, resistor R2, and output c); and first/second power supply terminals 5V/0V correspond to input terminal 39, first inverter 20 (with PFET 36, NFET 38, resistor 40, and output 28), driver 24 (with first (PFET) transistor 48, second (NFET) transistor 50, and output 26), and second inverter 22 (with PFET 42, NFET 44, resistor 46, and output 30); and first/second power supply terminals 16/18 shown in the applicants’ own Fig. 1. With the addition of Love’s capacitor 80 to Naganuma’s circuit, Love’s NFET 80 (connected to output b) corresponds to the applicants’ NFET 32. Voltage responsive switchable capacitor NFET 80 will have its control electrode (i.e. gate) connected to the control electrode of first transistor 7₁ to receive the voltage (on b) applied to the gate of first transistor 7₁, and voltage responsive switchable capacitor NFET 80 will have its control electrode (i.e. gate) connected to the control electrode of second transistor 7₂ to receive the voltage (on c) applied to the gate of second transistor 7₂. Therefore, with this circuit configuration, the Naganuma/Love circuit will be effectively equivalent to the applicants’ own Fig. 1. Love’s NFET 80 configured

capacitor will be open when the voltage at its gate (e.g. corresponding to output b or c of its respective inverter block) is below the capacitor configured transistor's threshold voltage (i.e. the voltage difference between the gate and drain/source connections is less than the NFET's threshold voltage), and have a finite capacitance when the voltage at its gate is above the capacitor configured transistor's threshold voltage (i.e. the voltage difference between the gate and drain/source connections is greater than the NFET's threshold voltage). This corresponds to waveform V76 shown in Love's Figs. 5a and 5b. For example, NFET 80 has a threshold V_{tn} , and when voltage V76 (corresponding to the voltage across the gate and drain/source of NFET 80) is below V_{tn} , the waveform shows minimal charge (corresponding to a substantially open circuit with respect to NFET 80). However, once V76 goes above V_{tn} due to the pull-up action of transistor 68 and resistor 72, the waveform shows a charging slope (corresponding to a finite capacitance that allows V76 to charge, with respect to the RC time constant of resistor 72 and capacitive element 80). First (PFET) transistor 7_1 will be off when the voltage on b is higher than a threshold voltage equal to $5V - V_{tp}$ (with V_{tp} representing a threshold of a PFET), and be on when the voltage on b is lower than that threshold voltage. Second (NFET) transistor 7_2 will be off when the voltage on c is less than a threshold voltage equal to $0V + V_{tn}$ (with V_{tn} representing a threshold of an NFET), and be on when the voltage on c is higher than that threshold voltage. Therefore, it would be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that the threshold voltages are between the levels of the opposite power supply terminals, and these capacitor configured transistors (i.e. corresponding to Love's 80) function as one type of a switchable capacitor. This renders claims 1 and 31 obvious. The modified Naganuma/Love circuitry provides a slightly more complex time constant circuit, which can be used to more

accurately set the delay time via the RC components within the circuitry. For example, the time constant of each block can be more accurately controlled with this more complex circuitry, thus ensuring that both transistors within driver 7 will not be conducting at the same time (i.e. simultaneously on), and the dead time (i.e. when both switching transistors within the driver circuit are off) will be kept to a minimum. For example, one of ordinary skill in the art knows that excess current caused by both transistors within the driver circuit conducting at the same time is undesirable. Therefore, it is preferable to ensure the conducting transistor of the driver will be turned off before the other transistor within the driver will be turned on. However, too much dead (or blanking) time caused by both transistors being off at the same time is also undesirable for fast switching operations. Therefore, the on/off operations of the driver transistors must be carefully, and accurately, controlled to ensure both transistors are temporarily off before the next transistor begins to conduct, and to also minimize that dead time. This control can be accomplished by utilizing Naganuma's inverter blocks 6₁ and 6₂, along with corresponding capacitor configured transistors from Love. Since each of power supply terminals 5V and 0V are a known type of a DC power supply terminal of the circuit, claim 3 is rendered obvious. Resistors R1 and R2, and each transistor within inverters 6₁ and 6₂, are resistive type elements, and at least one of them is connected to supply current to their corresponding switchable capacitor in response to the voltage at first terminal 1, rendering claim 4 obvious. With one corresponding switchable capacitor 80 of Love coupled to each output of Naganuma's inverter blocks 6₁ and 6₂, the at least one switchable capacitor includes first/second voltage controlled switchable capacitors connected to delay coupling of the transitions to the control electrodes of the first/second transistors 7₁/7₂, and claim 8 is rendered obvious. Circuitry

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6₁, 6₂, 80, 80 further includes first/second inverters 6₁/6₂ each having input terminal 1 for simultaneously enabling the first/second inverters in response to voltage at first terminal 1, and an output terminal (b for inverter 6₁, and c for inverter 6₂). Output terminal b of first inverter 6₁ is connected to supply current via a first DC path (through 5₁₁) to first capacitor 80 and control electrode b of first transistor 7₁ to the exclusion of second capacitor 80 connected to control electrode c of second transistor 7₂; and output terminal c of second inverter 6₂ is connected to supply current via a second DC path (through 5₂₂) to second capacitor 80 and control electrode c of second transistor 7₂ to the exclusion of first capacitor 80 connected to control electrode b of second transistor 7₁, rendering claim 14 obvious. Since first/second transistors 7₁/7₂, first/second inverters 6₁/6₂, and first/second capacitors 80/80 all comprise field effect transistors, claim 15 is rendered obvious. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, as previously described, to include all of the field effect transistors on an integrated circuit chip that includes first/second resistors R1/R2 respectively connected effectively with first/second transistors 7₁/7₂ and first/second inverters 6₁/6₂, rendering claim 16 obvious. Since first/second resistors R1/R2 are respectively included in first/second inverters 6₁/6₂, claim 17 is also rendered obvious. For the same type of reasoning as previously described above, and without repeating all of those various details, first/second inverters 6₁/6₂ each comprise a PFET and an NFET (i.e. inverter 6₁ comprises PFET 5₁₁ and NFET 5₁₂, and inverter 6₂ comprises PFET 5₂₁ and NFET 5₂₂), and the inverters are driven in parallel by voltage on input terminal 1, rendering claim 18 obvious.

Claims 19 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Naganuma/Love as applied to claim 18 above, and in view of the references by Yoshizawa et al. (Yoshizawa) and

Takenaka. As previously described, the obvious modification of Naganuma's circuit with respect to Love's switchable capacitors, reads on the limitations recited within claim 18, and closely correspond to the applicants' own Fig. 1 circuit. Although Naganuma's resistors, and their corresponding transistor, are just the reverse of what is cited within claim 19, this claim is rendered obvious for the same type of reasoning previously described with respect to the rejection of claim 19 using the Naganuma/Bui/Yoshizawa/Takenaka references. For example, it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art that the present configuration of Naganuma's first resistor R1 and NFET 5₁₂, of first inverter 6₁, can be reversed. These two components are coupled in series between node b and 0V, and whether the transistor be coupled between node b and resistor, or the resistor is coupled between node b and the transistor, will not affect the operation of these components within the circuit (e.g. see the equivalent inverter type circuits 5 shown in Figs. 3 and 2 of Yoshizawa).

No claim is allowable.

Claims 2, 5, 7, and 10 have been cancelled.

Response to Arguments

The applicants' arguments filed Feb 4, 2008 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. The applicants argue "that the time constant circuit of Naganuma and time delay circuit of Bui are designed for two different purposes and would not be combinable and/or interchangeable." However, the examiner strongly believes time constant and time delay circuits are closely related. For example, control of a time constant determines the delay of a circuit. Therefore, a time constant circuit can be one type of a time delay circuit, and vice versa. The use of different labels does not make the operation of similar, or functionally equivalent, type circuits

different. The applicants also argue that placing Bui's time delay circuit in the circuit of Naganuma wouldn't add any advantage. The examiner's rejections indicated Bui's capacitors 807 and 808 were added to nodes b and c of Naganuma. These capacitors would provide additional control of the time constant, providing the user with more accurate control of when the driver transistors would be turned off and on. Even though claim 1 now cites relationships between the switchable capacitor and the corresponding transistor, these relationships would be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art with respect to when a transistor has the opposite conductivity type as the capacitor configured transistor. For example, a PFET has a threshold voltage corresponding to $V_{dd}-V_{tp}$ (wherein V_{dd} represents a positive power supply voltage provided to the transistor/circuit, and V_{tp} represents a threshold of a PFET), and an NFET has a threshold voltage corresponding to $V_{ss}+V_{tn}$ (wherein V_{ss} represents a ground or low power supply voltage provided to the transistor/circuit, and V_{tn} represents a threshold of an NFET). Therefore, it would be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that threshold voltage $V_{dd}-V_{tp}$ is higher (e.g. different) than $V_{ss}+V_{tn}$, and the corresponding transistor and capacitor will have known operational relationships. For example, assuming an NFET (configured as a capacitor) is coupled between V_{ss} and the gate of an PFET, the following operational conditions would occur: 1) a high (e.g. above $V_{dd}-V_{tp}$) on the gate will have the PFET off, while keeping the NFET on with a finite capacitance; 2) when the gate voltage transitions below $V_{dd}-V_{tp}$, but is above $V_{ss}+V_{tn}$, the PFET will be turned on and the NFET will still be on with its finite capacitance; and 3) once the gate voltage drops below $V_{ss}+V_{tn}$, the PFET will remain on, but the NFET will turn off and provide a substantially open circuit. Therefore, it is not understood by this examiner why one of ordinary skill in the art would not understand these relationships.

The applicants cite “Due to the non-enabling disclosure of Bui” within the amendment’s comments, but that reference is enabling, and the use of an inverter, resistors, and capacitors to provide a controlled delay (or time constant with respect to the RC circuitry) is well known to those of ordinary skill in the art. The use of Bui’s capacitors is one known way to control a time constant of a circuit, and modifying Naganuma’s time constant circuits by adding capacitors to their outputs (e.g. as shown and disclosed by Bui) would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art as another way to obtain, and/or control, a predetermined/desired time constant.

Therefore, the rejections described in the previous Office Action, and in this Office Action, are deemed proper with respect to the broadest reasonable interpretation of the claimed limitations and the prior art references.

Any inquiry concerning this communication from the examiner should be directed to Terry L. Englund whose telephone number is (571) 272-1743. The examiner can normally be reached Monday-Friday from 7 AM to 3 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner’s supervisor, N. Drew Richards, can be reached on (571) 272-1736.

The new central official fax number is (571) 273-8300.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (571) 272-1562.

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/T.L.E./

Examiner, Art Unit 2816

/N. Drew Richards/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 2816